

sports

U.S.-Japanese compete tonight in world-class meet at Mac Court

By BARRY BREEDE
Of the Emerald

The International spotlight falls on Eugene tonight as a taste of the Orient invades Mac Court for the nation's top gymnastic meet. The Japanese National Team comes to town to face the best in this country, the United States National Team.

Bill Ballester, University of Oregon gymnastics coach and coach of the United States squad gleams with enthusiasm when he mentions the significance of this meet.

"Anybody who misses this meet is going to miss the chance of a lifetime. You won't even have to be familiar with gymnastics to appreciate this competition," he said. These are some of the finest athletes in the world here in Eugene. You won't see a similar performance until the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. This isn't just a superb gymnastic meet, this is a great sporting event."

Ballester isn't just playing the role of promoter, either. He does have the best in the world to back up his claims.

Heading the bill is the Japanese men's team, who are looked upon as the number one gymnasts in the world. "They seem to be at a whole different level in terms of abilities," says Ballester. "Their stunts are unreal and they are the toughest competitors in the world."

The Japanese spirit of competition can be remembered by the heroic efforts of its team members in the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. Trailing going into the final high

Full weekend for Duck swimmers women face Cal, men host meet

Some of the finest swimmers on the West coast will be featured at Leighton Pool this weekend, which is the site for the 15th annual Dolphin Swimming Championships set for this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

The Oregon men's team will host the event, while the Oregon women's team will face California in the Cal Invitational Friday and Saturday before returning for the final day of the Dolphin meet.

The top team at the Dolphin meet will be the David Douglas Swim Club, led by 16-year old De-

bar competition, the last Japanese competitor pulled out a remarkable comeback win over the Russians, and did so on a broken leg.

If Ballester faces one problem in this meet, it is in a lack of individual knowledge about his opponent. "Individually we don't know that much about the Japanese. We know their strengths are in the high and parallel bars, and that they are the best gymnasts in the world."

The American male contingent of six, all-around gymnasts, is led by international all-star Kurt Thomas. Thomas, a member of the 1976 Olympic squad and the winner of numerous international meets is according to Ballester, "the finest gymnast that this nation has ever had."

He doesn't have a specialty," says Ballester, "he is just plain the best in every event. He is as good as any specialists in the country, no matter what the event. He is just an unreal competitor."

Another Olympian, Mike Carter from Louisiana State University, will bring his diversified act to Mac Court. "Carter is a real power gymnast," says Ballester, "he is definitely one of the strongest physically around."

The local touch will not be missing in tonight's meet, as the Ducks' Jim Kelch will be making his international competition debut.

Gene Whelan of the Univer-

nnis Baker. Baker beat Olympic medalist Bruce Furnis in the 100-yard butterfly in last year's meet. The affair begins Friday at 6:30, with both the Saturday and Sunday sessions getting started at 9 a.m.

For the women, they'll face similar competition in Cal to the Washington team they defeated last weekend. Michelle Menkens, Tama Cuddeback, and Kathy Hemmer of Oregon will all face tough competition from their Bear counterparts.

sity of Iowa will also showcase his talents tonight for the U.S. squad. Whelan is the winner of numerous national meets and was a former U.S. member at the 1976 World University Games.

Rounding out the men's squad will be two high school sensations, James Hartung and Phil Cahoy, both world class competitors. "These two guys are better than most collegiate performers," says Ballester. "They are just super gymnasts."

The American women's squad also looks tough for tonight's meet. Heading the way will be 14 year-old Karen Kelsall, a 1976 Olympian. The remainder of the six women squad is composed of several members of the U.S. National Junior Elite team, a hard-working group that is training for the 1980 Olympics.

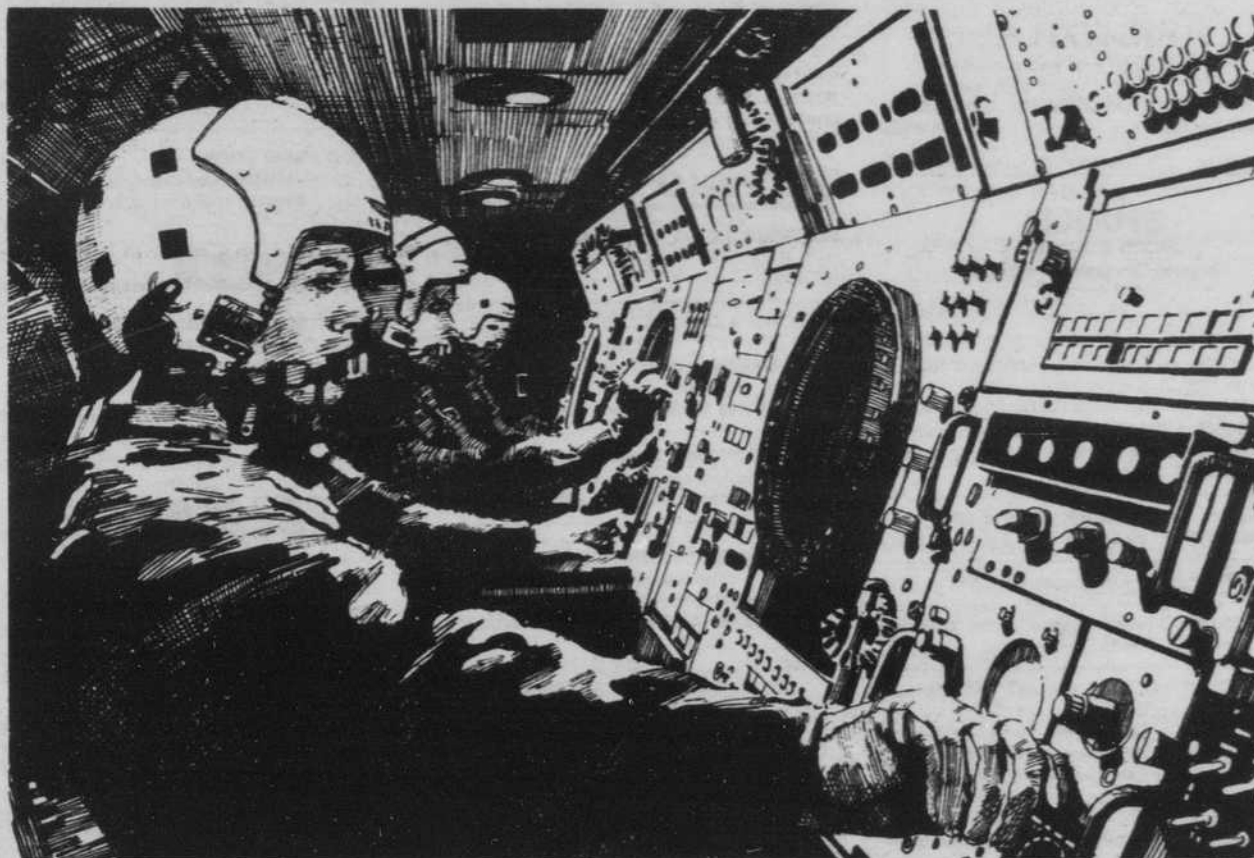
The women are young, as the oldest competitor is just 15 years-old, and they will face an experienced Japanese women's team.

Tonight's meet, which is being nationally televised on Home Box Office, begins at 7:30 p.m.. Ticket prices are \$5 for reserved seating, \$3.50 for general admission, and \$2.50 for students.



Photo by Mike Baer

Kurt Thomas, who will lead the U.S. team this Friday against the Japanese, is one of the spectacular gymnasts audiences will be able to view competing in the internationally-sanctioned meet.



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